



The Dark Side of Online Social Networks (OSNs): Exploring Users' Negative Experiences

By

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Certificate of Original Authorship

I, Layla Boroon declare that this thesis, submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the award of Master by Research in Computing Science, in the Management and Leadership School/Engineering and IT Faculty at the University of Technology Sydney. This thesis is wholly my own work unless otherwise referenced or acknowledged. In addition, I certify that all information sources and literature used are indicated in the thesis.

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Dedication

*To my love Kazem whom I am proud of him for his generosity, supports, passion, kindness and patience and
to my beloved parents for their encouragement that let my dreams come true.*

And

To my dear son Soheil who has made my life more amazing, enjoyable, meaningful.

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Abstract

The use of Online Social Networks (OSNs) has increasingly grown over the past few years, and subsequently many studies have reported several positive effects of using OSNs. However, negative effects of using OSNs have so far received less attention. Adverse outcomes, risks, and negative effects of using OSNs have been considered as the dark side of OSNs. Given a lack of a comprehensive picture of the dark side of using OSNs and how various negative effects maybe related, this study has been conducted to i) explore adverse consequences of OSNs use from users' perspective that have been previously reported in the literature, ii) categorise the explored negative effects to identify the characteristics of the dark side of using OSNs, iii) develop and validate a framework for the dark side of OSNs use, and iv) propose directions for future research for developing strategies in order to reduce negative effects of OSNs use.

Firstly a systematic literature review was undertaken to gain an insight into existing studies on the dark side of OSNs use. A total of 43 negative effects of OSNs use were extracted from the content of the 29 selected articles for review. A coding process was used and negative effects were categorised into six groups or themes: i) cost of social exchange, ii) cyber bullying, iii) low performance, iv) annoying content, v) privacy concerns, and vi) security threats. Then, on the basis of these six themes and their underlying sub-categories, a framework for the dark of using OSNs and its characteristics was proposed. Next, the validity of the proposed framework was verified by conducting a semi-structured expert interview research. The interview process was held with 12 experts in the field of information systems, computing science and psychology. Experts agreed with 94.3 % of findings, and provided feedback for minor changes and clarifications.

This study contributes to the literature in terms of both theory and practice. The key theoretical contribution of this study is to offer a comprehensive picture of users' negative experience through developing and validating a framework for the dark side of OSNs use. The practical contributions are i) raising users awareness of the adverse consequences of using OSNs, ii) informing policy makers about what constitutes the dark side of OSNs, iii) guiding practitioners and authorities to develop educational content for users, and iv) informing OSNs developers about how to protect their users against adverse outcome of platform use.

Keywords: online social networks, online social communities, dark side, negative impacts, negative effects, risk, challenges, harm